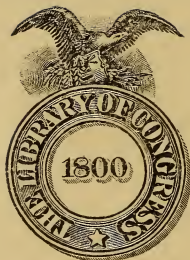


PR
2972
F7W5





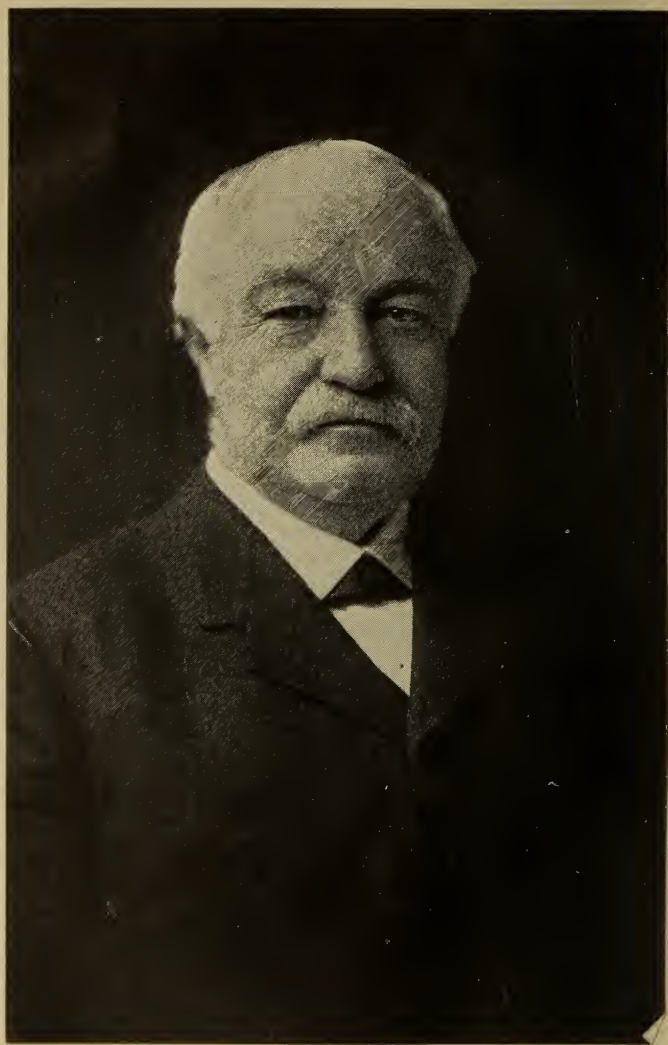
Class PR 2972

Book .F7W5



1

$$\frac{43}{103}$$



Appreciations of Horace Howard Furness

OUR GREAT SHAKSPERE CRITIC

By TALCOTT WILLIAMS

FROM THE CENTURY MAGAZINE, NOVEMBER, 1912

HORACE HOWARD FURNESS

By AGNES REPPLIER

FROM THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, NOVEMBER, 1912



CLEVELAND
PRIVATELY PRINTED
1912

PR 2972

.F7 W 5

*GREETINGS from the Librarian
and the Vice-Librarians to their
associates in the Cleveland Public
Library and the Western Reserve
Library School*

Christmas 1912

*Reprinted by the kind permission of the Authors and the Publishers,
and with the approval of the sons of Dr. Furness*

Copyrighted, 1912, by The Century Company

Copyrighted, 1912, by The Atlantic Monthly Company

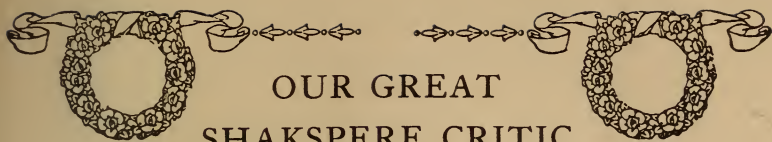
*The portrait is a copy of the last photograph of Dr. Furness,
which was taken in 1908, and is furnished by
his son, W. H. Furness, 3d*

Transferred from
Library Office.

3 JAN 1 1913

OUR GREAT SHAKSPERE CRITIC
THE LATE HORACE HOWARD FURNESS

NOVEMBER 2, 1833—AUGUST 13, 1912



BY TALCOTT WILLIAMS



NLY a great man can accomplish a great task. For fifteen of Shakspeare's most familiar plays, Horace Howard Furness condensed the criticism of three centuries for each play in a single volume, save *Hamlet*, which has two.¹ From 6000 to 8000 works have been published on Shakspeare. All on each play is brought within the compass of its volume. Who holds this volume holds the fruits of all past criticism and comment on the play.

Mere industry can do much, but mere industry could never build the monument of these volumes. I confess I never look at the impressive row without amazement at the labor for which they stand. It would be much, if this were all. Long labor of this order grinds like a

¹ The plays edited by Dr. Furness are *Romeo and Juliet*, 1871; *Macbeth*, 1873; *Hamlet*, two volumes, 1877; *King Lear*, 1880; *Othello*, 1886; *The Merchant of Venice*, 1888; *As You Like It*, 1890; *The Tempest*, 1892; *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, 1895; *The Winter's Tale*, 1898; *Much Ado about Nothing*, 1899; *Twelfth Night*, 1901; *Love's Labour's Lost*, 1904; *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1909, and *Cymbeline*, completed and to appear. His son Horace Howard Furness, Jr., will complete his father's task, and has already published *Richard III*, 1911, and revised *Macbeth*.

glacier over a writer's style and individuality. Textual criticism saps men. There is a certain form of stupidity never found except in 'notes.'

Small have continual plodders ever won
Save bare authority, from others' books.

Nothing saves a man from this but personality. The first great tonic is humor. Dr. Furness, man and work together, brim with it. Who else would have made a merry mark of the one word in Shakspeare—in *The Tempest*, 'young *scamels* from the rock'—for which no one has ever suggested a convincing or even plausible meaning? The humor needed to salt these barrels and barrels of Shaksperian pemmican is much more than the capacity to see a joke. This is to humor what a pocket-dictionary is to an encyclopedia. What is needed for adequate comment on Shakspeare, the most English of all figures in the world of letters, is that numberless capacity to see the broad laugh in all things which lies so near to tears that when the coin of fate is flipped no man knows which is to be uppermost. This gives sanity. It enables the editor of a Variorum to know from time to time what a fool a German scholar can make of himself and his author. I suppose no man could see Horace Howard Furness, that solid figure, that sturdy step, that firm face of roomy planes and liberal modeling, those twinkling eyes, that air of benignant wisdom and general good-nature, without

seeing that the worst joke of all, life itself, could not daunt this resolution or dull this humor.

There is a look we all know on the face of the judge—a detached habit of thought. It comes on the bench, and it comes, too, let me assure you, if a man has had before his bar for forty years all the culprits who for two centuries have been writing about Shakspeare. His beam will stand sure and he will ‘poise the cause in justice’ equal scales.’ There are scholars whose lives are given to the great in letters who become surfeited with honey and ‘in the taste confound the appetite.’ Nothing saves from this but the incommunicable capacity for the perception of the best. This capacity grows by what it feeds upon. Through these volumes there has grown certainty of touch and serenity of judgment, but from the first issue there was apparent, as in the man, the norm which is not to be corrupted even by the Elizabethan extravagance of the greatest of Elizabethans.

Dr. Furness came to his life task through the Kemble tradition. The Kembles, who succeeded Garrick, first gave dignity to Shakspeare. Three critics of the contemporary stage, dramatic critics all, Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt, two of them working journalists, began the present attitude. It has since been impossible for any scholar to say, as Samuel Johnson did, that a passage in a third-rate play, Congreve’s ‘Mourning Bride,’ was better than anything in Shakspeare.

The stage was dear to him, and he believed that no play could be adequately understood unless it was heard. The foremost players of his day he knew, and each had counseled with him, and he had gladly learned from them. With Fanny Kemble and her light touch and perspicuous, penetrating interpretation as a model, he read the familiar plays himself to many audiences, interspersing comment. To all who read or act he was a living proof that lines are 'read' by the mind and that he or she who fully understands will fully express, and he or she alone. Deaf as he was, stress, cadence, emphasis, intonation, and expression were as manifold, accurate, and illuminating as his comment. All was suffused with the cheer and glow of strength, and had behind that incomparable organ of interpretation, a mind that knew, loved, and voiced the inner meaning of the uttered word.

It is now sixty-five years since Dr. Furness, a boy of fourteen, received from Fanny Kemble a season ticket for her readings. In her readings she sat at a green baize-covered table still cherished in his library. She made him a Shaksperian for life. He was living in a city which, until Boston took its place a little over twenty years ago, as Chicago is doing to-day, gave the stage a more serious, steady, intelligent, and consistent support than any other.

To a local stage possessing this tradition the Philadelphia of threescore years ago added

through his father, William Henry Furness, for fifty years head of the Unitarian Church founded by Joseph Priestley, a more intimate contact with the romantic movement in England than fell to other young Americans of the period. It was in Philadelphia that Wordsworth was first appreciated at his full value by an American. It was there that Coleridge was first printed. There, in a commonwealth for two centuries nearer Germany than any other American state, German translation began. William Henry Furness early addressed himself to this field. His daughter, Mrs. Annis Lee Wister, continued the task through thirty years, her last work appearing in a volume of her brother's *Variorum* series. Where other commentators in our tongue, in either home or abroad, have looked to English comment, Dr. Furness from the first significant dedication of his *Hamlet* (1877), written in personal exultation over German triumph as proving Germany no longer the 'Hamlet of Nations,' has seen Shakspeare as a world poet, has come close to German authority and research, and equaled its thorough and exact character without falling into its pedantry or its far-fetched gloss.

From many causes he knew all it is to be a gentleman, and when every year he rose as dean of the Shakspeare Society on St. George's day to give the solitary toast, 'William Shakspeare, gentleman,' it was on the last word that his

sturdy accent fell. Beyond all the other great voices of our tongue, Shakspeare was 'gentle.' The author of *Coriolanus* loathed the general mass. He scarce mentions it without touching on its evil smell. Its sweaty nightcap ever stank in his nostrils. Certain sympathies are needed for full critical appreciation of the poet who was the last word of the feudalism of the past to the democracy of the future, and these sympathies Dr. Furness had.

The Shakspeare Society first began his study. For sixty-one years its fortnightly meetings have gathered a group of men foremost in Philadelphia. One has read Shakspeare there with a cabinet-minister, a chancellor of the bar association, a judge of the first rank, a great physician as well known in the art of letters as in the letters of his art, and a novelist whose best seller has not had its total exceeded. It was in a like practical atmosphere that, a young man not yet thirty, Dr. Furness was stirred half a century ago to try to compare texts by the aid of a scrap-book. Out of this grew the Variorum, first with the first folio for a basis and later the Cambridge text. He had leisure, a perilous gift. He early collected, until 7000 volumes were at hand in a building for their use; but most collectors are swamped by their apparatus. 'A Concordance of Shaksperian Poems,' 1874, by Mrs. Furness, bespoke a common bond in a perfect union. In 1883 she was taken. After a generation, those

who then saw his grief from without will not adventure to speak of it. A sense of loss was never absent from him. It drove him to arduous labors, which the years made a habit of life. Save a single volume of his father's intimate friendship with Emerson, he wrote nothing but the *Variorum*. His prefaces, his addresses, and his letters should, now that he is gone, make a volume. He preserved the epistolary gift, lost in our day. His simplest note had style, charm, and weight.

In his research he was to the end a firm believer in the study of the plays and the plays alone. The order in which the plays were written did not interest him. For 'weak endings,' 'incomplete lines,' and all the newer apparatus of Shakspeare study, he had an unconcealed disregard. It was not for him. He would have questioned his personal identity as soon as question the personal authorship of Shakspeare's plays.

The happy fortune befell me once at his side and over his ear-trumpet to say of him that which greatly pleased. It was at the luncheon when the New Theatre gave him a gold medal and he monopolized the affectionate attention of every woman in the room. His appreciation gave whatever value there was to my words, in which I said that it was not as a scholar unrivaled and a critical authority unequalled that he would be most loved and remembered, but because his work had made accurate study possible to the

wandering player, given the solitary teacher on the frontier the best of past criticism, and armed the smallest village club with a library of learning, making the best of Shakspeare the general possession of all. It was for this he labored. It was this American ideal that inspired him. It was in the service of this ideal that he renounced all royalties.

It is only as a friend I write of Horace Howard Furness, as one of those that loved and knew. It is ever ill writing of one's friends when they are gone, but his going changed the very horizon of life for us all, robbed of its landmark the landscape of the years, and left a gap where once we all looked up and learned and had new sense of the fashion in which long purpose, fulfilled and never forgotten, shapes character and carves cliffs from which men see afar.

For forty years he sat at a desk and worked to make books from books on a book. In all our American life there is no other, few in any land, who so encysted himself in a task wholly of letters. There goes with this for most, as all know, the bent figure, the absent-minded or the self-conscious gaze, aloofness from the actual. Not he. To the last there was the sturdy, erect figure, the ruddy, full face, shaped and blocked as of a man of many tasks, the resolute mustache, the solid chin, the stiff, short, aggressive hair, early whitened by tears and tasks—'your white-haired son,' as he wrote in an inimitable

acknowledgment to his father in one of his volumes. Even a year from eighty his very step was decision. He bore down Chestnut Street in his weekly visit from his country home like 'a royal, good, and gallant ship, freshly beheld in all her trim.'

There is in Philadelphia a little group which has dined together just short of four decades every three weeks for eight months of each year. He was of the first that met, and the last of the first to go. To one who began thirty years ago as the youngest of those who sat at this board, and now, alas! finds himself among the elder at a table peopled with the past, nothing so bulks in all the round of a manifold social contact as this dominant figure, alert, awake, clear-visioned, felt through all this gathered group of men. Each of them was himself felt in all the various walks of life, on the bench, in law, in medicine, in letters, in art, in journalism, and in affairs; yet he the center, stone-deaf. How did he do it? I do not know. I only saw. He alone had the secret. Gay, responsive, indomitable, flashing sheer personality, and with a big silver ear-trumpet moving here and there, into which some one at his side poured a reversion of the passing talk, who is there whom you know, or whom you have known, who could have done it? None other that I know. Yet he so did it that one felt that the best recipe and assurance of unflagging talk, of explosive, masculine laughter, of

a perpetual source of the dearest and most precious thing on earth, the easy interchange, conflict, and contact of friends with friends—the best recipe for all this was to have there a great scholar, unable to hear a word until it was dropped into the silver trumpet, yet giving edge, guidance, direction, and inspiration to all the flow of mutual utterance that has run in this well-worn channel for twoscore years.

To do this was more like his very self than all his throned volumes; and I am not sure but that, in the great chancery of existence, it is better worth while to have made friends gay, high-spirited, and ready to give a frolic welcome to all the years as they came than to be known ever after, as he will be, as foremost in his great field. It was like him to concentrate all his social life on this one group. Elsewhere he was always sought and scarcely seen, though his house was graced by an open hospitality the loss of which in time he made up by night work. How wise to know your friends in your forties, and to gather them and to be with them to the very threshold of the eighties! How far wiser than the wandering way in which, like children, we fill our hands so full that we can neither use, nor give, nor leave, nor enjoy! It was like him resolutely to keep this dinner of high talk and plain fare, with men who dined much and well elsewhere, to a dollar apiece, as a constant protest against a lavish age which kills all by gild-

ing it, as with the luckless boy in the Medicean festival.

Life was compounded by him of simples; but they were 'collected from all simples that have virtue under the moon.' He lived in one city and loved it. Two homes housed all his years.

He sprang of a goodly ancestry and was justly and openly proud of it. He held high the long descent of men given to the works of the mind. His father was known before him, and his sons were known with him and will be known after him.

His heart visibly and frankly warmed, though without word or bruit, when in a narrow span of years he and his son Horace Howard Furness, Jr., published each his volume which garner the comment of all the years on a play of Shakspeare. Another son, Dr. W. H. Furness, in the same span, wrote an authoritative volume on the Dyaks of Borneo, placing in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania the best existing monographic collection on the region he studied. A daughter, Mrs. Horace Jayne (Caroline Furness Jayne), issued the one most important book ever published on the perplexing, fascinating, and almost unknown field of cat's-cradles, a mine of patient research and accurate, skilful description. His sister, Mrs. Caspar Wister, published the long series of translations from German novels the success of which, among a score of

failures in this field, was wholly due to the skill with which the 'translator' adapted this fiction 'made in Germany' to the English-speaking world. Five years ago this brother and sister were at work side by side, Mrs. Wister on the proof-sheets of her fortieth German translation, 'The Lonely House,' by Adolph Streckfuss, and he on the proof-sheets of *Antony and Cleopatra*, the twelfth in his monumental march. Her first translation, 'Seaside and Fireside Fairies,' from George Blum and Louis Wahl, had appeared forty-three years, and his *Romeo and Juliet* thirty-six years, before. His brother, Frank Furness, whose death preceded his by so short a span, was, when a mere lad, in Rush's Lancers, and all his life looked the cavalryman, with his drooping, yellow mustache and his seamed face. He retained to the end the walk of a man who, for years together in his youth, has felt the saddle-leathers between his legs. Like Lever's hero, he once escaped capture by taking a barn-yard fence no other man would have dared or persuaded his cavalry mount to venture. By carrying powder to a battery not only under fire, but through burning woods, he won a medal of honor. At Cold Harbor he risked life openly and flagrantly by walking out between two firing-lines a few rods apart to give a wounded Confederate a drink of water. Years later, when there came to this dauntless soul heartbreaking grief, he solaced himself by finding through a news-

paper friend, who sowed the strange and moving tale broadcast in Southern papers, the man whose life he had saved, bringing him to Philadelphia and filling a month with mutual memories for both. To the world Frank Furness was known as an architect, a pupil of Richard Morris Hunt.

It could be only in such a family that, as a family lark at a family dinner, a novel was written, the first chapter by Horace Howard Furness, the others in turn by the rest, three sons, a daughter, a son-in-law, and a daughter in-law, no author to kill a character without the consent of its creator, and all printed in seven copies as 'Grace Auchester.' I foresee a pretty penny for this volume in catalogues of Shaksperiana a century hence.

It is the odd blunder of a dull world that social buoyancy and the notable mind seldom march together; but, as an acute thinker has said, a man with a strong pair of legs can walk east as easily as he walks west, and our great Shaksperian had all the mirth that rang under the rafters of the Mermaid. He made the Hasty Pudding Club at Harvard. He was the dancer of his year and led in the play of more than sixty years ago. I like it that after his death there were found, preserved through all the half century, the pink tights and the spangled skirt which the toil-worn commentator had worn in glad youth as *Mlle. Furnessina*. In the world of si-

lence in which he lived so long he seemed to know laughter by instinct. His speech on the 'Miseries of Old Age' at a Harvard dinner four years ago swept the tables. He presided over a dinner or a meeting marvelously. His instinct, his attention, his capacity to interpret a look as easily as a word, carried him through all. Nor was humor ever far from the ceremonial surface of things. For example, at the lunch given at the opening of the Bryn Mawr College library—it was on the hottest of June days, and he was sweltering under the crimson trappings and beef-eater hat of his Cambridge degree of Litt.Doc. (1899), when a young friend spoke a consoling word to him. He replied, 'Ah, Mademoiselle, il faut souffrir pour être *swell*.'

The world narrowly missed in him a great Arabic scholar. His trip abroad after his graduation at Harvard carried him far afield. He was in Damascus when the Crimean War set the East ablaze. He saw Richard Burton, imperious-souled, a vision of masterful will, holding his consular court; and to the vision he recurred again and again. He had a week or two in the desert. He became enamoured of Arabic and its study, of which relics exist in a grammar and reader that he owned. But his brief days over Semitics had this strange by-product. In the polychrome Bible, projected by Professor Haupt of Johns Hopkins, and halted midway for lack of support, Dr. Furness, perhaps the only man

alive so versed in Elizabethan English that it was as the tongue to which he was born, and knowing enough of Hebrew, furnished the translation of the revised text. In the Hebrew lyrics and psalms translated for this edition of the Old Testament he reached the summit of his style, an incomparable mingling of nice scholarship and exalted utterance. How fit it was that the Bible and Shakspeare should attract the same critical capacity!

If I were to sum by a single inanimate object the temper and tradition of Dr. Furness, I would turn to the gloves, in his unrivaled collection, which one is glad to believe were Shakspeare's. They are manifestly the gloves of an Elizabethan gentleman not too large in build, gold-embroidered, and shapely. They were treasured as genuine by the descendants of Shakspeare's son-in-law, the physician who attended him in his last illness, and were handed down in that family. They passed to Garrick, who gave them to Philip Kemble, and so by descent again they passed from Fanny Kemble to their recent owner. There again is the double line of grace, the descent both of line and of genius, to make precious the gloves that rested on Shakspeare's hand, took its shape and knew its strength and beauty.

HORACE HOWARD FURNESS



HORACE HOWARD FURNESS



BY AGNES REPPLIER



CONJECTURAL criticism,' observes Dr. Johnson, 'demands more than humanity possesses, and he that exercises it with most praise has very frequent need of indulgence. Let us now be told no more of the dull duty of an editor.'

With these words of soberness ringing in his ears, Dr. Furness began more than forty years ago the vast labor which has placed him at the head of Shakespearean scholars, and has made the student world his debtor. He brought to bear upon his task qualities essential to its completion: patience, balance, a wide acquaintance with Elizabethan literature and phraseology, the keenness of a greyhound on the track, an incorruptible sense of proportion, and an appreciation, equally just and generous, of his predecessors' work. Leisure and that rarest of fortune's gifts, the command of solitude, made possible the industry of his life. Above all, a noble enthusiasm sustained him through years of incredible drudgery. 'The dull duty of an editor'! Well may Dr. Johnson heap scorn upon the words. When one is fitted by nature to enjoy the pleasure which perfection in literary art can give, one does not find it dull to live face to face

with vital conceptions of humanity, embalmed in imperishable verse.

The first volume of the new Variorum, *Romeo and Juliet*, was published in 1871. Dr. Furness confessed that he chose the play because he loved it, and because he thought it probable that he would never edit another,—an anticipation happily unfulfilled. As he worked, he saw more and more clearly the imperative nature of his task; and, in his preface to *Romeo and Juliet*, while giving ample praise to Boswell's Variorum of 1821, he states simply and seriously the causes which make it inadequate to-day. Even the Cambridge edition of 1863, which Dr. Furness held to have created an era in Shakespearean literature, and to have put all students of Shakespearean text in debt to the learned and laborious editors, lacks one important detail. There is no word to note the adoption or rejection of contested readings by various students and commentators. This Dr. Furness considered a grave omission. 'In disputed passages,' he wrote, 'it is of great interest to see at a glance on which side lies the weight of authority.'

To read the fourteen prefaces which have enriched the fourteen plays included in the new Variorum, is to follow delicately and surely the intellectual life of a great scholar. There was an expansion of spirit as the work advanced. From being absolutely impersonal, an unseen editor,

arranging and codifying the notes of others, sifting evidence and recording verdicts, Dr. Furness emerged gradually into the broad light of day. In the later volumes, every note dealing with a disputed point, closes with a judgment, or dismisses the dispute as futile. A shrewd humor, held well in check, illuminates the dusty path of learning. To distinction of style has been added the magnetic grace of personality. If we cannot say of the *Preface*, 'With this key Dr. Furness unlocked his heart,' we can at least learn from it how much of his heart he gave smilingly away to a lady of such doubtful merit (what is the worth of merit in a bad world!) as Cleopatra.

For the first five plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*, Dr. Furness formed his own text. The remaining nine were reprinted from the First Folio.

'Who am I,' observes the conservative editor, in justification of this change of plan, 'that I should thrust myself in between the student and the text, as though in me resided the power to restore Shakespeare's own words?' This instinct of conservatism strengthened in Dr. Furness with every year of work, until it became a guiding principle, making for vigilance and lucidity. 'Those who know the most,' he was wont to say, 'venture the least'; and his own ventures are so carefully considered as to lose all chance of hazard. Upon internal evidence, 'which is of imagination all compact,' he looked forever

askance. Hypothetical allusions to historic personages and events (we like to think that there are half-a-dozen such crowded into a score of Oberon's lines), he dismissed as unworthy of critical consideration. Even when points of resemblance came as close as do the affectations of speech in *Love's Labour's Lost* to the weary euphuisms of Lyly, Dr. Furness stoutly refused to trace a dim connection. An undecipherable word or phrase never presented itself to his level judgment as a species of riddle, to be guessed at frantically until the end of time. If he did not know what the word or the phrase meant, he said so, and went on his way rejoicing. Who can forget his avowal of 'utter, invincible ignorance' as to the mysterious 'scamels' which Caliban finds on the rock, and his determination to retain the word as it stands. 'From the very beginning of the Play,' he reminds us, 'we know that the scene lies in an enchanted island. Is this to be forgotten? Since the air is full of sweet sounds, why may not the rocks be inhabited by unknown birds of gay plumage, or by vague animals of a grateful and appetizing plumpness? Let the picture remain of the dashing rocks, the stealthy, freckled whelp, and, in the clutch of his long nails, a young and tender scamel.'

So, too, with Mark Antony's 'Arme-gaunt Steede,' which, since the publication of the First Folio, has supplied abundant matter for conjecture:

he nodded,

And soberly did mount an Arme-gaunt Steede.

Dr. Furness prints conscientiously two solid pages of notes anent this mysterious epithet, giving us every suggestion that has been proffered and discarded concerning its possible significance; at the close of which exhaustive survey he adds serenely: 'In view of the formidable, not to say appalling combination of equine qualities and armourer's art which has been detected in this adjective, Antony would have been more than mortal had he not approached his steed with extreme caution, and mounted it "soberly."'

Far more remarkable is the incurious attitude preserved by Dr. Furness in regard to the chronology of Shakespeare's plays, his indifference to dates which have cost other commentators years of study and speculation. Many and stern were the reproaches hurled at him for this indifference, but he remained indifferent still. Indeed it was his most noteworthy characteristic that, while regarding his own work with a steadfast and sane humility, he was wholly unvexed and unmoved by criticism. Immaculately free from what Dr. Johnson terms 'the acrimony of scholiasts,' he never assumed an editor's rôle to be an 'intellectual egg-dance' amid a host of sensitive interests. Nor did he begrudge, even to the youngest critic, the pleasure of flaunting some innocent rags of research—the mere swaddling clothes of learning—in the face of his pro-

found and gentle scholarship. 'Great tranquillity of heart hath he who careth neither for praise nor blame,' said the wise à Kempis, who knew whereof he spoke; and I have many times heard Dr. Furness quote with approval those stern and splendid lines in which Dr. Johnson, confiding his dictionary to the public, expresses his frigid insensibility as to its reception.

Indifference to dates was but one feature of that serene unconcern with which Dr. Furness regarded the hidden personality of Shakespeare. He was not merely content, he seemed glad to know no more of the poet over whom he had spent his life; and because 'every assertion connected with Shakespeare is accompanied, as a ground-tone, by the refrain "it is not unlikely,"' he found such assertions to be little worth his while. 'We cannot tell whether Shakespeare was peevish or gentle,' he wrote, 'sedate or mercurial, generous or selfish, dignified or merry; whether he was a Protestant or a Catholic, whether he loved his home or liked to gad abroad, whether he was jocund or sombre, or whether he was all these things by turns, and nothing long.'

Even the Sonnets afforded to Dr. Furness's mind no key to the enigma. He held that Shakespeare followed the fashion of his day, a fashion borrowed from Italy, which made of the sonnet a personal thing (no Italian would have dreamed of writing a sonnet on Venice and the Rialto as Wordsworth wrote one on London and West-

minster Bridge); and that the poet's essentially dramatic spirit gave to his own sonnets a dramatic form. They seem spoken by one human being to another, spoken in accents of grief, of doubt, of ecstasy, of despair; but in this manner do all Shakespeare's characters speak. This is the impelling force of the dramatic spirit, peopling earth and sky; not the impelling force of the personal spirit, seeking to take the world into its confidence. Shakespeare may even be permitted to bewail his outcast state, without our beginning straightway to sniff a peccadillo.

That the dramatic spirit which baffles scrutiny should have made a powerful appeal to Dr. Furness was right and reasonable. It was the appeal of consanguinity. Like all his race, he had the actor's gifts: not only spirit and fire in declamation, not only the flexible voice and the appropriate gesture; but the power to lose himself past finding in every character he portrayed. Those who have heard him read, know what I mean. The clarion call of Henry the Fifth before the gates of Harfleur, his prayer upon the field of Agincourt, — these things were not mere elocution, however noble and effective; they were passionate appeals to man and God, breaking from the lips of one whose head was reeling with the joy of battle, whose heart was heavy with the awful burden of authority. It was as a boy of fourteen that Dr. Furness first heard Fanny Kemble (Mrs. Peirce Butler) read Shakespeare's

plays, and his enthusiasm awoke, never to sleep again. It was as a listener, not as a student, that he received his most powerful and durable impressions. To this early influence was due, in large measure, the preservation of the dramatic feeling through a long life of patient and laborious research.

From Fanny Kemble, too, came the gift of Shakespeare's stage gloves, most precious and most honored of relics. Their history is a notable one. In 1746 they were presented by William Shakespeare, a poor glazier, 'whose father and our poet were brothers' children,' to John Ward, when that generous actor played *Othello* at Stratford-on-Avon, and devoted the night's receipts to repairing Shakespeare's monument in the church. John Ward, with a sense of fitness as pleasing as it is rare, gave these gloves in 1769 to David Garrick, who bequeathed them to his widow, who bequeathed them to Mrs. Siddons, who bequeathed them to her daughter, Cecilia, who gave them to Fanny Kemble, who gave them to Dr. Furness in 1874. It is not often, in these days of millionaire collectors, that the right things belong to the right people so consistently and persistently as have these worn gauntlets.

Dr. Furness's power of sustained labor seemed well-nigh miraculous to a generation which stands forever in need of rest and change of scene. For forty years he worked on an average ten

hours out of the twenty-four and, under pressure, thought little of adding a few hours more. For twenty years he lived in his country-seat at Wallingford, remote from the importunities of the town. Here in the uninvaded seclusion of his noble library he sat, resolute and absorbed, while the long quiet days merged into the quiet nights.

With the inspired sagacity of the scholar, he admitted to his solitude only the scholar's natural friend and ally, the cat. Generations of cats sat blinking at him with affectionate contempt as volume after volume of the *Variorum* drew to its appointed close. Companionable cats accompanied him on his daily walks through sunny garden and shaded avenue, marching before him with tail erect, rubbing themselves condescendingly against his legs, or pausing, with plaintive paw upraised, to intimate that the stroll had lasted long enough. Warrior cats, to whom was granted the boon of an early and honorable death, drank delight of battle with their peers on many a moonlight night, and returned in the morning to show their scars to a master who revered valor. Siamese cats, their pale-blue eyes shadowed by desires that no one understood, brought their lonely, troubled little hearts to his feet for solace. And all these wise beasts knew that silence reigned in the long working hours. They lent the grace of their undisturbing presence to the scholar who loved to lift his

head, ponder for a moment over the soul-satisfying nature of their idleness, and return to his books again.

‘To those who think, life is a comedy; to those who feel, a tragedy.’ Dr. Furness, thinking profoundly, feeling intensely, with a sad heart and a gay temper (that most charming and lovable combination!) replaced illusions with philosophy. His rare powers of conversation, his marvelous memory, his information, which, unlike the information of Macaulay, was never ‘more than the occasion required,’ his unfailing humor, his beautiful vocabulary, rich yet precise, his swift light sentences, conveying important conclusions, all made him the most engaging of companions. There was no talk like his, —so full of substance, so innocent of pedantry, so perfect in form, so sweetened by courtesy. Well might it have been said of him, as Johnson said of Burke: ‘If a stranger were to go by chance at the same time with him under a shed to shun a shower, he would think, “This is an extraordinary man.”’

The serenity with which Dr. Furness submitted to encroachments on his time and strength equaled the serenity of Sir Walter Scott. The hospitality of Lindenshade, like the hospitality of Abbotsford, was boundless. The kindness of its master was invincible. Poets sent him their verses, dramatists their plays, and novelists their stories. Authors who meditated writing

essays on Shakespeare's dogs, or oaths, or fire-arms, and who seemed unaware of the existence of a concordance, sought from him counsel and assistance. People who were good enough to believe that Shakespeare really wrote the plays attributed to him by his contemporaries, were anxious that Dr. Furness should be made aware of the liberal nature of their views. To one and all the great scholar lent a weary and patient ear. To one and all he gave more than their utmost dues.

A man of exquisite charity, speaking evil of none; a man of indestructible courtesy, whose home was open to his friends, whose scant leisure was placed at their disposal, whose kindness enveloped them like sunshine; yet none the less a man whose reserves — unsuspected by many — were proof against all; a past master of the art of hiding his soul, 'addicted to silent pleasures, accessible to silent pains.' It is not the portentous gravity of the Sphinx which defies the probe, but the smiling gayety which seems so free from guile. One had to know Dr. Furness long and intimately, to understand that his dominant note was dramatic, not personal, and that his facile speech betrayed nothing it was made to hide.

That the task upon which his life had been spent, and which his death left uncompleted, should be taken up by his son, was to Dr. Furness a source of measureless content. In the preface to *The Tempest*, published in 1892, he re-

corded his indebtedness to his father, to 'the hand whose cunning ninety years have not abated.' In the preface to the revised edition of *Macbeth*, published in 1903, he recorded his indebtedness to his son, to the younger hand which had been intrusted with the work, and had accomplished it so deftly. When Dr. Furness died in August, his last volume, *Cymbeline*, was fast approaching completion. It will be published in mid-winter, just as he left it, the fifteenth play of his editing; and with it will appear *Julius Cæsar*, the third play edited by Mr. Horace Howard Furness, Jr. A monument of scholarship, a verdict, final for many years to come, a rich mine for possible successors.

For Dr. Furness always maintained that he would have many followers in the field of Shakespearean research, that, in the future, other students would do his work over again, and do it differently. He was content to be a step of the ladder, and he knew better than most men that 'the labour we delight in physics pain.' The beauty of his surroundings, the magnitude and perfection of his library, the honors done him by English and American universities, the close companionship of his third son, Dr. William Henry Furness, intrepid traveler and explorer, — these things lent dignity and relish to his life. He lived it bravely and mirthfully; he stood ready to lay it down without regret.

Six weeks before his death, being then in per-

fect health, he wrote to me: 'My grave yawns at my feet. I look down into it, and very snug and comfortable it seems.' In the gallant acceptance of life and death lies all that gives worth to man.

Horace Howard Furness



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Feb. 2009

PreservationTechnologies

A WORLD LEADER IN COLLECTIONS PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 156 958 2

